COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Colchester, CT

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

April 14, 2022 ~ 5:30 P.M.
Colchester Town Hall Meeting Room 1

MINUTES

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Vice-Chair Mary Tomasi, Secretary Jessica Morozowich (through 6:30PM), Donna Antonacci, Margo Gignac, Rosemary Gignac, Christopher Rivers

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: None

1. CALL TO ORDER
   Vice-Chair Mary Tomasi called the meeting to order at 5:40 PM.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT
   Deanna Bouchard and Tina Pappalardo provided an overview of their concerns regarding special education in Colchester. as advocates for the larger parent group. They stated several parents are scared of retaliation and do not want to come forward. They both shared personal stories as well as the history of their struggles with the previous Director of Pupil services, the use of attorney's at individual education plan (IEP) meetings, IEPs not being followed properly, and the overall sense of intimidation and lack of collaboration with parents when it comes to special education.

3. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS
   3.1. Discussion Concerning Parental Feedback Pertaining to District Special Education Services

   The Board received advice from Council Julie Faye. The Board then asked parents what qualities would be important to have in a new Director of Pupil Services and Special Education. The Board discussed creation of an anonymous survey which would allow all parents to feel safe voicing concerns and gathering input. This idea was well received.

4. *PUBLIC COMMENT
   In response to the Board's inquiry about qualities important in a Director of Pupil Services and Special Education, the public used words such as compassionate; transparency; ability to work with and communicate appropriately with parents, kids, and administrators; collaborative; working with parents as a team so they feel they have a real seat at the table; using the parents as resources; clear and consistent communication with parents, teachers, and administrators; and having a more worldly view of special education students and not simply wanting them to stay in the town but spread their wings as other students get to do.

   Kathy Voiland shared a personal story regarding the long struggle with her daughter who

is now not receiving any services due to the intense stress with the IEP process and lack of appropriate plan for her child.

Jennifer Cox stated she would like to see the new Director of Pupil Services and Special Education bridge the gap between parents and students.

Both Ms. Bouchard and Ms. Pappalardo stated it was imperative to have parents involved in the hiring process. Ms. Pappalardo said she is curious to see how the parents were selected for the committee that met with the outside consultant. She stated that none of the parents she spoke with that put in their names were ever contacted.

Motion by: M.Gignac
To develop a subcommittee for the development of an anonymous survey in regard to special education.
Second by: C. Rivers
Vote: Unanimous
Roll call: Mary Tomasi, Margo Gignac, Donna Antonacci, Rosemary Gignac, Christopher Rivers

Motion by: M.Gignac
To have a follow up meeting with a more robust community conversation after the survey is completed.
Second by: R.Gignac
Vote: Unanimous
Roll call: Mary Tomasi, Margo Gignac, Donna Antonacci, Rosemary Gignac, Christopher Rivers

The survey committee will plan to meet Wednesday, April 20, 2022 at 3:30PM at a location to be determined.

5. ADJOURNMENT
   The meeting adjourned at 6:45PM.

Minutes provided by Jessica Morozowich, Board of Education Secretary and Margo Gignac, Board of Education Member